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Accountability system praised for encouraging higher achievement

Columbia – Eight years following the passage of landmark legislation that set into motion a system of high academic standards, assessments, training, public reporting, and assistance, South Carolina has again been recognized for its efforts to improve teacher quality and third for raising academic standards and improving accountability.

Quality Counts at 10: A Decade of Standards-Based Education, the 10th annual report card on the state of school reform nationwide, was released Wednesday.

“The catalyst to urge education improvement is the education accountability system,” said Alex Martin, EOC Vice Chairman. “It is rewarding for South Carolina to be consistently recognized for its overall commitment to raising student achievement.”

“South Carolina’s system is designed to increase the academic performance of all students to ensure our state has a workforce ready to utilize information technologies, to solve problems creatively, and to exhibit the ethical, responsible behaviors our communities and employers need today and in the future,” said Martin.

Furthermore, Martin stated the South Carolina General Assembly should be recognized for their continued commitment to schools, even when budgets were tight.

“Lawmakers maintained their investments in professional development and technical assistance in schools even when times were tough,” Martin stated.

In the 2006 *Quality Counts* report, South Carolina is one of only eight states to receive an A for its efforts to raise standards and accountability.

“Central to standards-based accountability are clearly-written standards which are aligned with national and international expectations,” stated Jo Anne Anderson, Executive Director of the EOC. “These standards provide the basis for assessments, ratings, professional development and technical assistance.”

South Carolina was also recognized in this year’s report as one of only five states that include information on parent involvement, school safety, and class size on school report cards. The state also is among 18 that surveys students, parents, or teachers about conditions in schools. Report cards are annual publications that schools and communities can use to evaluate the performance of schools.

“The school and district report cards provide educators and the public with critical information to evaluate the performance of schools, as well as understand better the conditions, opportunities, and challenges schools face,” stated Anderson. “They allow us to evaluate our progress and make any changes necessary in order to meet our goal.”

“We have clearly made substantial progress in our system since the passage of the Education Accountability Act in 1998 and the accountability system is widely recognized as an aligned system designed to encourage higher achievement,” stated Martin. “However, we must continue raise the bar in order to reach the rigorous goals we have set for South Carolina’s schools.

Established by the EAA, the EOC is an independent, non-partisan, 18-member legislative committee made up of educators, business persons, and elected officials who serve by virtue of their elected position or by appointment of the legislature or governor. It bears responsibilities for the development and improvement of SC’s educational accountability system and for making recommendations to ensure the continuous improvement of schools.